

Impacts of Globalization in Appalachia

Participants in our listening sessions were asked to pinpoint the most significant impacts of the global economy on their communities. Following are the primary areas of impact they described.

JOB LOSS, DECLINING WAGES AND BENEFITS

JOB LOSS

The loss of jobs in many Appalachian communities continues. Many of those who attended our listening sessions insist that this trend is becoming more pervasive and more destructive. Manufacturing jobs—in textiles, furniture, shoes, electronics, and so on—have continued to disappear, often reappearing in countries like Haiti where an apparel worker earns as little as thirty cents an hour, compared to the average of \$8.42 per hour that U. S. apparel workers earn. ⁽¹⁾ It is abundantly clear that this race to the bottom is a really good deal for multinational corporations and a really bad deal for workers. (The “race to the bottom” is a popular expression used to describe the relentless search by international corporations for lower and lower wages.)

Studies of NAFTA-related job losses have shown that 766,030 actual and potential jobs were lost in the United States between 1993 and 2000. Seventy-two percent of these jobs were in the manufacturing sector. Of these losses, 279,141—or 36%—occurred in Appalachian states.

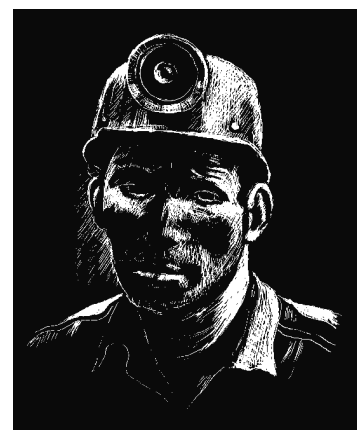
Textile and apparel job losses numbered 51,695 during this period, with North Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia and Pennsylvania among the national leaders. In electronics, Pennsylvania lost 5,042 jobs, New York lost 6,288 jobs and Ohio lost 4,185 jobs.

Lumber and furniture jobs were also hard hit, with a total of 28,291 Appalachian jobs lost. In this sector, North Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Tennessee were among the hardest hit.

Jobs in motor vehicles and equipment have been lost in great numbers, too. Ohio, with a loss of 9,826 jobs and Tennessee, with a loss of 3,658 jobs, were national leaders in this job loss category. ⁽²⁾

Jobs in agriculture and mining have continued to decline as well. Figures supplied by the United Mine Workers of America indicate that, since 1990, the number of working coal miners in Appalachia has plummeted from 95,417 to 44,529. In 1950, there were 143,000 miners in the state of West Virginia. By 1997, that number had dropped to 22,000.

The UMWA attributes many of these job losses to automation. It has been estimated, for example, that a dragline can replace up to 100 miners.



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Draglines have caused an estimated 29% *reduction* in mining jobs from 1987 to 1997, a period during which coal production *increased* by 32%.

The trend towards more mechanized forms of mining (and the resultant environmental destruction) is seen in the developing world as well. This trend leads to less, not more, employment. What's more troubling is that the labor movement seems powerless to reverse or stall these developments.

Another cause of job loss among U. S. miners is the movement of coal production to other countries. For example, over a sixteen year period, Alabama lost almost 2,000 mining jobs because the Drummond Company closed thirteen mines and moved production to Colombia, where miners are paid \$1.50 to \$2.75 an hour, and working conditions are deplorable. Drummond is now exporting four million tons of coal every year into Alabama and Florida from its Colombia operation. ⁽³⁾

JOB QUALITY

The quality of jobs remains a deep concern. In Appalachian communities where mines and factories once supplied decent jobs for working families, there is now a growing struggle for existence. The jobs which *have* been growing in much of the region—fast food, service sector jobs, telemarketing, jobs related to tourism—have not been the kind that people can raise a family on. The poultry business, which employs many migrant workers, and WalMart, have been identified as the employer of many workers who “take what they can get” in Appalachia. Listening group participants reported many instances of workplace abuse: of people required to work overtime, paid as part-timers or temporaries, and feeling they “have no choice” because of the scarcity of jobs.

WalMart is now the largest employer in the state of West Virginia. The world's largest corporation—with \$220 billion in sales and profits of \$7 billion annually—it has made the heirs of its founder, Sam Walton, fabulously rich. Five of them, in fact, are among the ten richest people in the world. Behind the smiling yellow face of the “low price” leader lies another story. WalMart is a corporation where the average employee makes \$15,000 a year for full time work. WalMart imports more goods from China than any other company in the world, profiting handsomely from the fact that Chinese apparel workers make an average of twenty-three cents an hour—sixty-four cents below the living wage. Walmart is a corporation whose operations eliminate three local jobs for every two it creates, destroying small local businesses. ⁽⁴⁾

All of this job stress, uncertainty and inadequacy has led to despair and frustration, as reported by the participants in our listening sessions. Former workers attempt to remain in the communities where they and generations before them once prospered, falling between the cracks and suffering a loss of self-worth. Families are disintegrating and family violence is on the rise. According to our listening session participants, many people turn to drugs and other destructive habits. Labs which produce methamphetamine are proliferating, and the trade in pain killers such as oxycontin has reached epidemic proportions in some Central Appalachian communities.

The decline in quality jobs may also be said to contribute significantly to the decreased tax revenues available for such things as schools, roads, parks and social services. Ironically, as more people slip into poverty, the services available to help them are dwindling.

Yet, we have heard of discouraged workers who welcome the jobs available at WalMart, in the service sector and at fast food chains. As bad as low-wage, part-time employment may seem to some of us, it is seen as a necessity in many communities where desperate workers, especially women, struggle to provide the basic needs of life for their children. All this, while they search with increasing frustration for adequate public education, childcare and transportation.

Mr. Barney Oursler, of the Mon Valley Unemployed Committee, based in Rochester, Pennsylvania spoke at CORA's hearing in March 1986. He reflected upon human dignity and the capacity of people to have control over their lives. He spoke of the debilitating effect of unemployment and described the family living under such circumstances as "a place of battles," a place where children become "something you are guilt-stricken about and unable to help."

The strategy of the committee, as Mr. Oursler described it, was to develop "self-help"—to help people get beyond the feeling that they are just "taking charity" by creating opportunities for them to be "empowered in some sense to help themselves."

Asked to reflect on these words in the light of present realities, Barney Oursler spoke of his work with the unemployed and how it has changed. "The problem today is not finding a job," he said, "it's how many jobs do you need to find to make ends meet?" In the 1980s there was a feeling that you could find a job, that you could get people to rally around jobs, but "today underemployment is much more a reality." Mr. Oursler ended his reflections by talking about the living wage. "The Living Wage Campaign got folks excited. We found in Allegheny County that 80% of registered voters supported a living wage for all publicly supported jobs—of \$12 to \$14 an hour."

PRISONS

Prisons have come to represent a major form of economic development in rural Appalachian counties where plants have closed and mining jobs have dwindled. Connections between prisons and economic globalization may not be immediately obvious, but this connection has influenced the doubling of the prison population over the past couple of decades. The decline in quality jobs, the cutbacks in welfare and the increase in the length of prison sentences, particularly for minor drug offenses, have all had an effect on the burgeoning prison population. Some people in CORA's listening sessions are aware that many of the inmates of these prisons have committed drug offenses and are, in fact, part of the growing underground economy developing in high-unemployment urban centers where decent manufacturing jobs may once have existed.

The United States now leads the world in the rate of incarceration of its citizens. In August of 2002, a record high of 6.6 million people—3.1% of the population—were on probation or parole or locked up in a prison cell. About half of all persons in prison are there for non-violent drug offenses. One particularly troubling aspect of this trend is that people of color are increasingly swept into the system. African-American youths are 48 times more likely to be convicted of a drug offense than are European-American youths. In fact, it has been estimated that approximately *one third of all young African-American males are in prison*. Hispanic youths are 13 times more likely than European-American youths to be convicted of drug offenses. (5)



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The racial implications of more prisons, tougher sentences and the emphasis on punishment—not rehabilitation—have not gone unnoticed, particularly by people of color, who have always borne the brunt of globalization’s burdens. The authors of “No Escape From History,” published in the magazine *Southern Exposure* in 1998, wrote of the “globalization” of the Americas—paid for in the blood and toil of the “savages” Columbus and others “discovered” in the New World. They wrote of the Africans who were enslaved in the United States, who helped build “King Cotton” into a force that controlled the political life of the United States in the nineteenth century, enabling imperialist nations such as Great Britain to expand their power into Africa and Asia. Following emancipation, African-Americans were relegated to lower wages and miserable working conditions under segregation, a circumstance that led to higher profits for business and special privileges for white workers. We should not be surprised, then, to discover that today African-Americans suffer unemployment rates double that of European-Americans. Nor should we be surprised that, as their low-wage work has been “globalized,” these “excess” workers are now being incarcerated as never before.

Globalization, because of its relentless search for lower wages, has led to higher unemployment in vulnerable communities. The resultant poverty leads, in turn, to the growth of the “informal” economy of drugs and petty crime. The increasingly punitive “justice” system and the ever-growing prison system take it from there.

PRISONS AS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Prisons are a business—a \$46 billion dollar business—and like all businesses, they must grow. For-profit prisons must show their stockholders they can manage efficiently, cut out the “frills”—and expand. The courts seem to have helped greatly with this expansion. Women make up the fastest growing segment of the prison population—and 80% of the women in jail are mothers. What’s even more disturbing is that 43% of parents are incarcerated more than 500 miles from their children. (6)

Since 1980 prisons have been promoted as a rural economic development tool. In the past two decades 350 rural counties, many in Appalachia, have built prisons. Studies have shown, however, that these prisons have not created any demonstrable economic impacts. There has been no significant increase in employment or per capita income in these communities. Often, local residents are seen as unqualified for prison jobs. Local businesses are often unable to provide the goods and services needed by prisons, and the community misses out on possible benefits. (7)

Our listening sessions revealed many troubling aspects of the “prisons as economic development” trend. Employment in prisons is seen as stressful—often leading to family violence and mental health problems. Also troubling is the often deliberate and systematic nature of the move to build more prisons for profit. People are beginning to understand that prisons don’t just happen, they are “put up by design.”

This system is often referred to as the “prison industrial complex.” It is a system that places profit far above rehabilitation, releasing unemployed and voteless men, women and youth into our cities and towns. Prisoners have long been disenfranchised and released to a society that is not prepared to employ them in meaningful, rewarding work. Now, there are *more* of these voteless, jobless men and women returning to

our communities. What's more, the abuses are not limited to the offenders. Often, prison cells are "rented" to other states and countries, inflicting the added punishment of separation on prisoners and their families. The racism inherent in this system has not escaped the notice of listening session participants. In fact, one of our participants remarked that "incarcerating black men is a way to kill the seed of the race."

The effect on communities where these new prisons are located was also explored in the sessions. It was noted, for example, that jail ministry is the fastest growing ministry in America. Other people complained that prison jobs promised to local people were given to "outsiders" and that "some applicants for prison jobs have worse records than the inmates."

One of the most troubling aspects of modern prisons is the tendency to employ prisoners in work which had formerly been done by low-wage workers on the outside. The federal prison in Manchester, Kentucky, for example, now produces fatigue uniforms for the U.S. military. Not long ago, in LaFollette, Tennessee, a company called Tennier closed down its operations. It had produced uniforms for the military. About eighty women lost their jobs.

This is the kind of story that is being told all over the "internal colony" of Appalachia, and elsewhere in the United States. The race to the bottom is taking place right *here*, right *now*. In fact, prisons—because of the extremely low wages and the utter powerlessness of their workers—have been likened to *maquiladoras*, the infamous factories located along the U.S.-Mexico border.

IMMIGRATION

A very significant aspect of globalization in Appalachia is the increasing presence of immigrants in our midst. The participants in our listening sessions talked about Somali immigrants in Ohio, Mexican workers in chicken processing plants throughout the region, Indians and Pakistanis

filling high-tech positions in Pittsburgh and second generation Puerto Rican workers moving from New York City into Pennsylvania. Everywhere we listened, we heard of hard-working people in restaurants; on construction crews; in poultry and hog processing plants; in agriculture tending

tobacco, vegetable, fruit, and thoroughbred racing operations; and as grounds-keepers on golf courses.

At the CORA Commission listening session, we viewed "Morristown Video Letters" which depicted interviews with Mexican immigrant workers and their families, speaking on both sides of the border. We also heard from labor organizer Juan Canedo, who shared the immigrant experience with us. Here, we learned about some of the larger, more



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remote forces that contribute to the influx of immigrants to Appalachia. We learned how trade and investment agreements like NAFTA are hastening the demise of small and subsistence farming in Mexico in favor of U.S. agribusiness, driving thousands of rural residents north to find work—and survival. We learned how American companies actually recruit illegal immigrants in order to obtain a compliant low-wage workforce. We learned how, on the whole, most immigrants would rather have stayed at home with their families had the global economy allowed them to prosper in their native land.

The anecdotal evidence of Appalachia's changing demographics is supported by the data. The Year 2000 census figures show that in the Appalachian states of Tennessee, North Carolina, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina the Hispanic population increased by over two hundred percent from 1990. Less dramatic, but still significant, increases of from sixty to two hundred percent occurred in Kentucky, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland over the same period. ⁽⁸⁾

Listening session participants also talked about the issues that inevitably arise in the process of integrating new immigrants into local communities. They spoke of the conflicts between new immigrants and local people over differences in language and customs, and of the competition for jobs. Some talked of violence and tension within immigrant communities. In Louisville, Kentucky there was resentment expressed about the “welfare checks” and job preferences available to refugees, but not available to migrants and U. S. poor people. In North Carolina, we heard of a company that fired its African-American employees and replaced them with Hispanics. Many of these workers were said to be undocumented. One Kentucky participant estimated it would cost \$10-15 an hour to hire local workers to harvest tobacco, compared to the \$5-6 an hour—without benefits—paid to immigrant workers. The “system” exploits migrant workers and denies jobs to local workers.

There was concern for the *welfare* of these newly arrived workers and their families. We heard talk about how these new workers take the lowest wage jobs, especially the jobs that locals don't want. The threat of deportation and the difficulty of getting visas are fundamental problems that create constant insecurity among immigrants and discourage them from pursuing their rights. Other more established (documented) immigrants have problems getting loans to start small businesses. There was also mention of the miserable housing of migrant farm workers all over the region. From Kentucky, we learned of child labor in the poultry industry, where 14- to 16-year-old Latino children are employed.

DOWNSIZING, DEREGULATION, AND PRIVATIZATION

DOWNSIZING GOVERNMENT

The loss of a job can have cruel and lasting effects upon workers and their families. Bills go unpaid, children go unfed, healthcare needs go unmet, tensions mount and the possibility of homelessness looms. Over the past several decades we have heard of workers losing their jobs because of “foreign competition” or aggressive takeovers by more successful competitors, or the relentless need to mechanize or “streamline.” We have become all too familiar with the consequences of these actions, prominent features of the global economy—features impacting workers both regionally and internationally.

Coinciding with this trend has been the “downsizing” of government, another hallmark of corporate globalization. One result of this government “downsizing” is the dismantling and reduced funding of welfare programs. We can now connect this shredding of the social safety net to the increasing vulnerability of the poor, minorities, the disabled and the chronically ill. Welfare “reform,” Medicare “reform,” Social Security “reform,” all—regardless of the expressed intent of the politicians and policy makers—are “structural adjustments” which make it more difficult for our most vulnerable citizens to survive in the global economy.

We now see looming state budget crises and wonder just how many lotteries and sales tax increases it will take to save us. States are facing \$76 billion deficits this year. Proposed budget reductions would eliminate Medicaid and state Children’s Health Insurance Programs and other related health insurance coverage for 1.7 million people nationally. Thirty-five states cut Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funding in 2003–2004 and 20,000 state workers’ jobs were eliminated in 2001. (9)

In states throughout the region, the struggle to balance the budget and provide essential services continues, even as the pressures to downsize increase. Tennessee, which is installing a state lottery, already has one of the most regressive tax systems in the country. Massive budget cuts in this state have drastically reduced funding for education, health care and state parks. Despite these cuts, there’s ample money available for road construction and new development projects, and for “incentives” to businesses that bring in low-paying, non-union jobs.

The listening sessions revealed a growing uneasiness with government downsizing. With regard to health care, there was concern for the decline in state Medicaid payments and exploding health care costs. The closing of rural hospitals was another concern. One participant in Central Appalachia described a recent car accident where people died because there was no county funding for an emergency response system. There was concern for people being “kicked off” welfare, then falling through the cracks when even low-wage jobs are not available. There was general frustration about the declining support for education at all levels—and the “solutions” named but not implemented by politicians and business leaders.

Some of the cruelest effects of government downsizing have been felt by our public schools. All over the Appalachian region, for decades, public schools have been facing budget cuts. Rural schools have been closing and “consolidating.” Small children are being bused to school for as many as four and five hours a day along narrow, winding country roads. Scarce funds for programs and facilities have been diverted from needy rural schools to schools in areas where parents have more political influence and more wealth. Schools in many African-American neighborhoods, some still suffering the effects of the “white flight” to private—sometimes “Christian”—schools, are now suffering the further pressures brought by government downsizing and privatization.

PRIVATIZATION

Privatization is a firm tenet of corporate globalization. Requirements by the IMF and World Bank that compel developing nations to sell their national assets are akin to the drive to privatize Social Security here in the U.S. It is also a growing concern among people in Appalachia, who are not convinced that they should “let the market decide” how to meet critical human needs.



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There is real concern that privatization will result in workers losing good jobs and benefits in public sector areas like maintenance, transportation, food services and human services, causing the wealth gap to grow even wider as corporations increase their profits with still more privatization efforts.

According to an article in the *Charleston, (W.Va.) Gazette*, West Virginia–American Water (WVAWC), a private company, has purchased the Charleston water system. WVAWC is owned by a British company, Thames, which is, in turn, owned by a German company, RWE Aktiengesellschaft.

The privatization of public water companies by foreign multinationals is a growing concern in many communities in our region. For one thing, private companies seem to need more operating money than publicly funded utilities. The WVAWC, for example, has already asked for, and received, a 15% rate increase totaling \$14.3 million. According to the *Gazette*, a 2001 study by a Pennsylvania consulting firm showed Charleston as having the highest water rates among 53 similarly sized cities. ⁽¹⁰⁾

Privatization in the health care field poses its own dangers for Appalachian residents. The privatization of formerly nonprofit community hospitals, the proliferation of private home health care companies and the Bush Administration's effort to privatize Medicare contribute to a decrease in accountability for basic health care institutional performance, while pricing basic health care services beyond the reach of ordinary people. All this is happening at a time when one in six Americans has no health care insurance. Strong evidence suggests that privatized health care does not deliver health care more efficiently, nor improve its quality. ⁽¹¹⁾

DEREGULATION

Closely tied to privatization in the designs of the global planners is the idea of deregulation. Markets are constricted, the planners believe, by the existence of laws and practices that seek to protect the natural environment or public health. Because corporate influence over the operations of governments—and of the public's tacit acceptance of this influence—laws often go unenforced, agencies are forced to get along with greatly diminished funds, and deregulation advocates are put in charge of regulatory agencies or nominated to sit in judgment when citizens seek justice.

The people we heard from in Appalachia seem not to be fooled. Environmental degradation from mountain top removal; factory hog farming and poultry industry waste; the deadly wastes left by industrial operations; and from the clear cutting of vast tracts of mountain land—remains a grave concern in the region.

Recent federal deregulatory actions have already had serious impacts on Appalachia. These include:

- proposed rule making changes that allow even quicker permitting of mountain top removal operations. (Mountain top removal mining is a process where entire mountain tops are blasted away and the coal removed. What's left is then bulldozed into adjacent valleys and streams.)
- regulations that allow state exemptions for clear cutting in national forests (Clear cutting is a forestry practice in which vast areas are virtually cleared of trees, exposing adjacent land to flooding.)

- the removal of many streams and wetlands from the purview of the Clean Water Act
- the rollback of previously adopted ergonomic standards that would protect millions of workers against repetitive motion injuries
- delays and rule making changes that would enable utilities and factories to avoid installing air pollution control systems
- rules that would allow increased waste runoff into waterways and a delay in implementing air pollution requirements on corporate hog farms
- Mine Safety and Health Administration rule changes governing the amount of respirable coal dust permitted in America's coal mines—changes that could quadruple the level of dangerous dust that causes “black lung” disease. (12)

Not content to quietly deregulate, the present federal administration seems to have taken an activist stance. In January, 2003, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, considering an appeal by the Bush Administration, overturned a landmark federal court ruling that had banned mountain top removal mining on the grounds that it violates the Clean Water Act. This appeals court ruling is certainly bad news for West Virginia, which has already seen almost 1,000 square miles of its mountain tops removed and 1,000 miles of its streams buried.

NORTH AMERICAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT, CHAPTER 11 AND THE FREE TRADE AREA OF THE AMERICAS

Trade and investment agreements like NAFTA and the FTAA contain their own little-known but potentially lethal contribution to deregulation. Chapter 11 of NAFTA gives corporations the right to sue governments for damages before secret WTO tribunals when they believe a law deprives them of profits. The tribunal's judgment trumps local, state and even national laws. The FTAA would extend the provisions of Chapter 11 to virtually the entire Western Hemisphere. (13)

In the new world order of free trade, deregulation is a “structural adjustment” and the United States federal government is doing its part to pave the way for the no-holds-barred profit-taking of the future. As NAFTA Chapter 11 challenges have already demonstrated, many global corporations want no restrictions placed on their ability to turn a profit. No regulations protecting the environment, health, or worker safety will be permitted to stand in the way of the global economy.

A discussion of the FTAA at one of our listening sessions revealed a growing awareness of the connection between the effects of such agreements on Appalachia and the structural adjustments that have already been imposed on people in the developing world. Participants talked about the loss of local sovereignty that follows the privatization of services. They talked about increased pressures on local businesses that



Aerial photo of a mountaintop removal mining operation near Kayford Mountain, W.Va.
Photo by Vivian Stockman
Oct. 19, 2003. Visit www.ohvec.org

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would come as foreign firms are free to compete without having to put up with pesky environmental, health or safety regulations. They talked of the loss of freedom, and the loss of the right to bargain collectively. They observed that “foreign” companies are already here—attacking environmental and labor laws and other regulations now in place. They clearly saw the challenges posed by the privatization of municipal utilities, prisons, public sector jobs and schools.

In our listening, we discovered a growing discomfort and an awareness that large corporations are manipulating the economy for their own purposes. There is a growing awareness, too, that corporate-controlled media isolates us from what is really happening in the rest of the world. This awareness, this discomfort, is leading to further skepticism about the purposes of the “free trade” agenda. An opportunity awaits those who will work for justice and peaceful change.

CIVIL LIBERTIES

A number of participants expressed deep concern about the loss of civil liberties in the nation, an issue that is fundamentally connected to America’s global role. The most serious impacts have been directed at Arab-Americans and other communities of color in the U.S. since September 11, 2001. A church member from Ohio told of an ecumenical coalition in his town that helped to rebuild a mosque that had been set on fire following September 11. This is but one of many instances where the religious community has played a healing role in the past two years. Here in Appalachia, those who work with new immigrants from all over the world perceived new pressures and threats, both from law enforcement and from the community at large.

Others conceded that they had failed to see the challenges to our civil liberties that began even before September 11, 2001, despite some hints. They noted that the police acted violently against the predominantly peaceful demonstrators at the 1999 WTO protest in Seattle. More recently, some who were peacefully gathered to protest the President’s rolling back of environmental regulations were told to move far away to an isolated “free speech” zone as his entourage whisked him away from the discouraging placards and faces. Some of our participants have friends who were incarcerated for long periods and heavily fined for non-violent acts of “criminal trespass” while protesting the continued production of nuclear weapons at Oak Ridge, Tennessee or the human rights abuses committed by the graduates of the infamous School of the Americas at Fort Benning, Georgia.

People were extremely concerned about the implications of the PATRIOT Act, enacted since September 11, 2001. What troubles many of them are the sweeping provisions which effectively prohibit the right to peaceably assemble. The “trickle down” effect of this draconian measure, and its descendent PATRIOT II, are also being felt region-wide. In West Virginia, a minor politician has suggested that opponents of mountaintop removal are “environmental terrorists.” An attorney who advises one of CORA’s member denominations wonders whether we should fund organizations that use public protests in violation of the PATRIOT Act.

In a flashback to the days when mine police and vigilantes enforced the coal bosses’ rules with deadly force, the United Mine Workers of America got a taste of what life might be like for a striking miner in the brave new world of corporate globalization. In 1991, a Colombian miners union asked for, and received, support from the UMW in a suit

brought against the Drummond Company. The company had failed to protect three union leaders in its mines and the men were subsequently murdered by right wing paramilitary troops. ⁽³⁾

There was also some talk in our listening sessions of increased military expenditures and military involvement in other countries—circumstances that might lead to increased outrage toward this country and increased threats. As the government responds to these threats, we could see further erosion of our freedoms and a weakening of our democracy. At the same time we heard that, while church folks have an awareness of the problems associated with globalization, they are also dismayed by the anti-American rhetoric sometimes used by some opponents of globalization.

This will remain a genuine challenge to all who are concerned about globalization. How do we educate and act in ways that clarify the impacts of globalization on the lives of average people everywhere? How do we do this in ways that hold the U.S. government accountable for the political disasters it is orchestrating in the world? And, most importantly, how do we do this in ways which promote peaceful change—without alienating our fellow citizens?

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

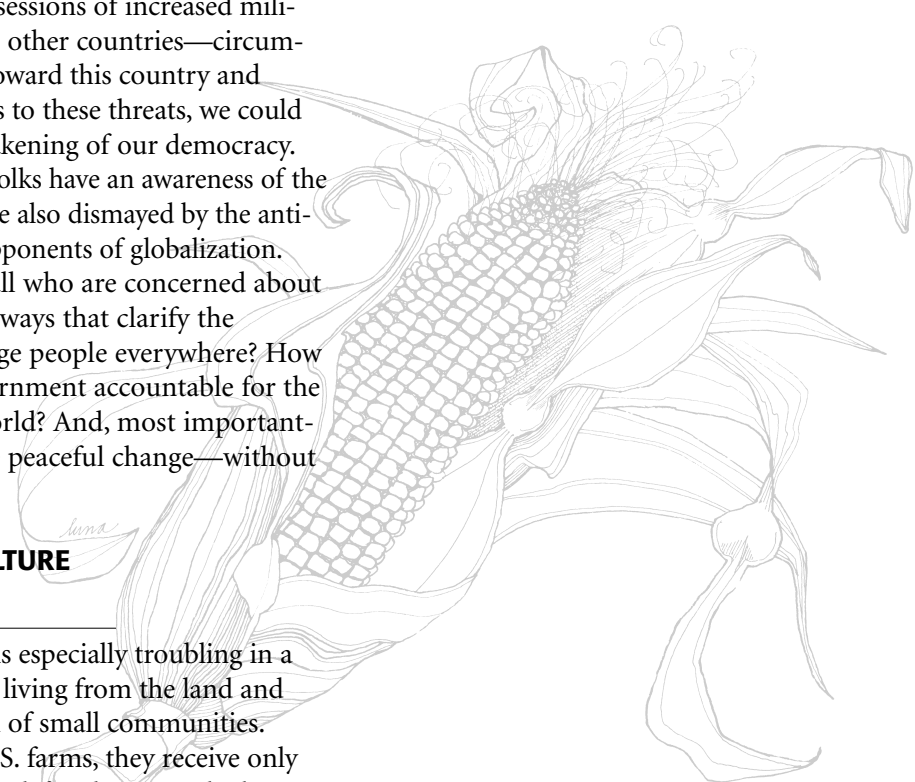
AGRIBUSINESS AND THE FAMILY FARM

The decline of the family farm in Appalachia is especially troubling in a region where yeoman farmers wrenched their living from the land and contributed significantly to the overall growth of small communities. While small farms still comprise 94% of all U.S. farms, they receive only 41% of all farm income. (A small farm may be defined as one which earns under \$100,000 gross income annually.) There are 300,000 fewer farmers now than there were 20 years ago. ⁽¹⁴⁾ As agribusiness has displaced small farmers in Appalachia and across the U.S., it is now doing the same across the world. In January, 2003, hundreds of thousands of Mexican farmers demonstrated in Mexico City against the lowering of agricultural investment barriers through NAFTA, a trend that encourages the takeover of farming land by multinational farming corporations. Not surprisingly, this trend is also driving millions of Mexicans north in search of a livelihood, or into homelessness and hopelessness in vast Mexican cities.

Participants in our listening sessions described how the poultry industry resembles tenant farming. One participant described it as a system in which “you build their building, you pay their prices.” Other participants told of the new immigrants who are exploited in unsafe poultry processing plants for very low pay. Poultry waste and corporate hog farm waste were identified as a serious threat to the environment and public health. The food itself is treated with antibiotics that reduce resistance to disease, and the lack of nutrition in the product has the potential to negatively impact the health of future generations. “Factory farms” are also expanding throughout the developing world, where environmental rules are less stringent and economic benefits outweigh the threats to groundwater and indigenous livestock and owners. ⁽¹⁵⁾

FOOD SAFETY

Considerable concern was expressed by participants about the effects of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on the food supply. Supported by giant multinational corporations like Monsanto, GMOs are developed for large scale plant and animal production with little or no testing



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of their toxicity or immune system effects, their effect on seed varieties and biodiversity, or their effect on soil fertility. On an international level, the same multinational corporations are pushing the use of WTO trade sanctions against any nation that tries to limit the importation of genetically modified foods.

Appalachian farmers have recently been burdened with the responsibility for substituting new crops for tobacco. They now must face the challenge of asserting the efficiency and productivity of family farming, in the face of agribusiness and its private and public allies. Facing this challenge, they are joined with other small farmers all over the world, in what has become a global struggle.

NOTES:

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